To Explore...

...is more than just to travel. It is to immerse yourself in a place, consider different perspectives, and make new discoveries.

This booklet can be a starting point for your own journey of discovery at Kenai Fjords. When you've completed the activities, share your journal with a ranger to receive your Explorer pin.

My Trip to Kenai Fjords

Date(s):

Weather conditions:

Places I visited/what I did:

Wildlife sightings:

My favorite part of my visit was:

The most surprising thing I learned was:

My most memorable experience was:

Use the blank pages at the end of this booklet for your own questions, notes, or sketches.
Survival

For over 1,000 years, this wild place was home to Alutiiq people. Harbor seals, mountain goats, and other animals that they relied on still roam the rocky slopes and inhabit the sea. Throughout time, people and animals have survived here by adapting to the natural rhythms of Kenai Fjords.

"In the game of life, less diversity means fewer options for change. Wild or domesticated, panda or pea, adaptation is the requirement for survival."

– Cary Fowler (Director, Global Crop Diversity Trust)

DID YOU KNOW THAT HARBOR SEALS DON’T HAVE EXTERNAL EAR FLAPS? THEY’RE ABLE TO CLOSE THEIR EAR OPENINGS WHEN THEY DIVE UNDERWATER.

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Imagine living in the fjords hundreds of years ago... this place would probably feel very different if it were your home. Consider how the objects below would have helped you survive. In the space provided, describe what you think your life would have been like and what would have been your greatest challenges.
Mountain goats are adapted to life on steep, rugged terrain. Imagine what it would feel like to look down on the fjords from a mountain goat’s perspective. Consider what it takes for them to survive in this environment. In the space below describe how you are like a mountain goat.

- Hard keratin toenail protects the foot.
- Snow and dirt can get trapped between the toes when slipping, which helps the goat stop.
- Soft inner foot pad. Great for traction!
- Dew claws. Good for stopping!

Look for tufts of shed mountain goat fur caught on plants and rocks.
Experience

A picture may be worth 1,000 words — but it can’t quite capture the feeling of being in the presence of a massive glacier or seeing a bald eagle soar overhead...

Find a place in the park that speaks to you. Close your eyes. Focus on the feeling of the air... the sounds and scents around you. When you open your eyes, notice the small details - a drop of dew, light, and shadows. Describe your experience for someone who has never been here - what did you feel, hear, smell, and see... Was there something you could taste?

“What we do not see, what we do not hear, what we do not touch, we can never really know.” — St. Lawrence Island Yupik Elder.
Even though we all know what ice feels like, we yearn to touch a glacier. Why do you think this is? Share your thoughts here...

To Do:
Look for a floating chunk of glacial ice!

Notes:

TRIVIA
Small chunks of glacial ice are called "Growlers" after the sound that trapped air makes as it escapes from melting ice.
Plates shift, glaciers advance and retreat, forests grow... The National Park Service is charged with preserving and protecting places like Kenai Fjords so they remain “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations... But how do you “preserve” an ever-changing environment - especially when the rate of change continues to accelerate?

Show these photos to 3 people. Ask for their thoughts about what park managers can do to protect Kenai Fjords in light of our rapidly changing climate. Summarize their ideas.
Repeat photography is one way park scientists document change. Take a photo of something you’d like to revisit in the future (make sure to describe it you’ve been here before - retake a photo and see what has changed since your last visit. Post your photos using #kefjchange.

Photo Notes:

"Isn't it funny how day by day nothing changes, but when you look back, everything i changed.

C.S. Lewis
Just as we mark life events by celebrations or keeping mementoes, moraines (rock mounds) are milestones marking the past extent of a glacier. Compare Exit Glacier’s milestones with years that are significant to you. Write your milestones in the space most meaningful to you, and describe your connection to that glacial milestone.

How does comparing personal events with glacial milestones affect the way you think about Exit Glacier?

Connect

Glaciers

It’s hard to comprehend the enormity of geologic time. But scientists have been able to reconstruct Exit Glacier’s movement over the past 100+ years, allowing us to see glacial change on a more manageable scale.

Provided by the moraine dates. Take a picture of yourself by the year sign that is most meaningful to you, and describe your connection to that glacial milestone.
Sometimes it is enough to enjoy the moment, listen to the birds, or appreciate the beauty of the forest. However, learning to recognize different species can lead to a deeper understanding of the natural world.

Below are some of the birds you may encounter at Kenai Fjords National Park. Put a check mark by the species that you saw or heard during your visit. Circle the ones that are also found where you live.

"The birds I heard today, which fortunately, did not come within the scope of my science, sang as freshly as if it had been the first morning of creation" – Henry David Thoreau
Artists who found beauty in America’s wild places were among the first advocates for protecting scenic landscapes as national parks.

Rockwell Kent, believed to be the first American artist to paint what is now Kenai Fjords National Park, spent the winter of 1918-19 on Fox Island. His work brought the beauty of this remote place to public view.

The scenery and wildlife of Kenai Fjords continue to inspire young artists.

“I killed Whales in Resurrection Bay,” Rockwell Kent, Alaska 1919

“Blue-ringed Octopus,” Lindsey von Borstel, 2014

“‘It seems we have turned out of the beaten, crowded way and come to stand face to face with that infinite and unfathomable thing which is wilderness; and here we found ourselves - for the wilderness is nothing else.”

National Parks are important – not just because of the things they protect, but because of how they affect us. Places like Kenai Fjords provide a respite from our daily lives; they renew and inspire us. How does this place inspire you? Draw a picture, or write a poem or haiku to express your thoughts.
"I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in." - John Muir (1838–1914)
Use the “passport stamp” to mark the date of your visit. Attach ticket stubs, brochures, photos, or any other mementoes that will help remind you of your experiences at Kenai Fjords National Park.

If you don’t finish during your visit, you can still mail us your completed journal to receive your pin. (Be sure to include your return address!!)

ask a ranger to sign your journal here when you are all done.
We hope this Explorer Journal has enhanced your visit and has given you some things to think about. Perhaps you’ll be inspired to learn more about Kenai Fjords, explore other national parks, or find things you can do at home to help protect these special places. Take a few minutes to write a pledge that includes things you would like to do in the next year.

My Pledge

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead

Pledge Ideas:
- Avoid products with excess packaging (to help reduce marine debris)
- Reduce carbon footprint:
  - Switch to LED bulbs
  - Drive less
  - Check tire pressure
- Learn more:
  - Visit www.nps.gov/kefj
  - Join Alaska Geographic
  - Follow Kenai Fjords NP on Facebook